

Northfield Open Space Committee
Minutes, May 21, 2013
Town Hall – Planning Board Room

Items in italics require action prior to next meeting.

Present: Bob Hall, Joanne McGee, Sue Ross, Kate Rossiter, Jenny Tufts

Absent: Mike Barry, Jerry Wagener

Guests: Annie Chappell, Tony Stavely

The meeting opened at 7:30. Joanne served as temporary chair.

1. **Agenda:** The committee voted to add Annie's NMH/Mill Brook wetland report to the agenda after Member comments.

2. **Minutes:** The minutes of April 16, 2013, were approved as amended. The third sentence in #2 was changed to read "The field may or may not be included in the wetland parcel." Jenny/ Kate 5 – 0.

3. **Member comments:**

Jenny: First Light published its proposed studies for the Federal Energy Relicensing, and will hold meetings from May 14 to June 13. It has organized three working groups divided by topic. The group "Recreation, Land Use, Aesthetic Resources, Cultural Resources" will hold hearings June 11, 12, 13. More details are posted on the Ct. River Watershed Council's web site. *Since there seems to be no Selectboard involvement in the relicensing process, Jenny will ask Tom about the Selectboard interest in FERC; she feels that FRCOG should brief the Selectboard.*

Sue: Al Stegemann, the District 2 supervisor for Mass. Dept. of Transportation, has proposed a pedestrian bridge across the Ct. River after tearing down the Schell Bridge. The new bridge would be inspired by the Schell Bridge and modeled after the new pedestrian bridge in Keene which in turn was inspired by the Schell Bridge! Al's inspiration arrived after reading the most current issue of the Friends of the Schell Bridge newsletter. Jack Spanbauer called Sue and a few FSB members to a meeting with Paul Mark to announce the idea. The new bridge would be built using some federal funds which became available for programs that reduce carbon emissions. The state would own the bridge, and no dollars would be needed from the town. Annie suggested that we save the chestnut pavers from the bridge and perhaps sell them to raise money for "extras". The Selectboard will discuss this proposal at the June 4th meeting. Residents need to let the Selectboard know about support with letters of advocacy from individuals and organizations, such as the Historical Commission. *Sue will remind us about the June 4th meeting.*

Bob: Bob Hall's dog chewed up a valuable copy of a 1922 booklet titled "Places of interest about old Northfield walks, tramps, hikes and drives by motor car". Bob carefully put

the chewed pieces together and made a photocopy of the booklet. Joanne will give the booklet to Jerry.

Joanne: 1) The Americorps MassLift volunteers from Mount Grace are organizing a state-wide Open Space Conference on June 8 in Ashburnham. Jerry and Joanne are doing a workshop on Conservation Restrictions. Mike Barry is also part of a workshop. 2) Joanne suggested that we have a party for the Americorps volunteers around Aug 2 before they leave. Everyone seemed to enjoy the cookout last year. Joanne will clear a date with Willa. 3) The draft open space section of the Master Plan is 47 pages long! Although Jerry said we should check it for accuracy, no one wanted to print out 47 pages. *Joanne will email Bill Giezentanner to see if hard copies would be available at the next forum.*

4. **Millbrook wetlands**: Annie's group sent a letter to the NMH trustees asking that the wetland portion be separated from the golf course section and given or sold to the town. As yet, there has been no reply from the letter. Deb Mayberry received a cool reception from a trustee when talking about the wetlands. Bill Pratt suggested to Annie that the boundaries of the wetland portion should be flagged. The committee discussed costs for flagging and exactly what flagging meant. Annie says that Ed Snow and two others were interested in the golf course. Sue says the Selectboard is meeting in executive session about NMH land.

Annie's committee will meet again May 28 and brief the Selectboard June 4. Annie sent a letter to National Christian Foundation about the playing fields on Pierson Rd and the adjacent wetlands. NCF said it has to give any land to a 501c3 organization. *Joanne will send the revised grant flyer to Annie.*

5. **Final approval of OSRP changes**: A motion was made and voted to approve the newest changes to the OSRP. 5-0

6. **Crag Mountain update**:

According to Harry Sharbaugh, the AMC Berkshire Chapter volunteer for this section of the New England National Scenic Trail, negotiations with the landowner are "sputtering". Josh Surette, the National Trails person, began last November talking with the landowner who has said one reason for closing the trail is "unpleasant encounters with hikers". He does not want people telling him what to do with his land. Paul Daniello from Mount Grace and Josh met with the landowner and explained all the options for the land. It is clear that the land owner needs money from a transaction. Then in March the landowner declared that the trail is closed.

Mount Grace and Kestrel Land Trust are planning to develop a Forest Legacy application that will preserve land along the New England National Scenic Trail. Forest Legacy projects take three to five years but some National Park money was found to pay for a basic appraisal of the entire lot with the two houses. The landowner will probably not be happy with the appraisal. Funding sources, including Forest Legacy or Community Preservation funds, can not pay much above the appraisal figure. Once the appraisal is done, Mount Grace will be able to work out the value of an easement for the top of the mountain.

Meanwhile, a possible alternate trail from Old Wendell Rd. to bypass the top of Mt. Crag might use part of Bill Patterson and Cody Sisson's property. Initial landowner discussions have

been positive. It's important to build a trail without encroaching on personal space. All landowners must be comfortable with the trail.

Most importantly, residents should not contact the landowner to complain about the trail. Josh reports that some negative phone calls have happened. Apparently, some of the signs have been pulled down.

The first Town Forest trail is almost completed. It makes a nice loop, but is not blazed yet. Harry and Bob Pasteris are completing work on the trail.

7. **Trails/property boundary icon:**

The committee agreed that the proposed property boundary icon based on the design of the town flag was well done. Joanne felt that the name of the specific property should be around the bottom. Jenny felt that all the boundary markers should read the same. Joanne reminded the committee that this particular boundary marker was for the boundary and would be placed every 50 to 75 feet around the boundary of the property. A trail might begin with a marker that had a similar design but would be blazed with color. The trail marker could be a rectangular shape with the name of the trail. *Joanne will contact the sign company to get prices on the markers using the word differences. She will talk with Tom Wanslaben at Mount grace who oversees the stewardship program.*

8. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm. The next meeting will be June 18, 2013, at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne McGee, Secretary